

A 1508/1266

S E R M O N

Preach'd before

The Right Honourable the

L^d Mayor,

T H E

Aldermen, Sheriffs, and Governours of the several Hospitals of the City of London,

I N

St. Bridget's Church.

O N

Easter Tuesday, April. 17, 1707.

By FRANCIS ATTERBURY, D. D. Dean of Carlisle, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her MAJESTY.

L O N D O N:

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*Martis xxii. die Aprilis 1707. Annoque
Annæ Reginae Angliæ, &c. Sexto.*

THIS Court doth desire Dr. Atterbury,
Dean of Carlisle, to print his Sermon,
preach'd at the Parish Church of St. Bride's,
on Tuesday in Easter Week last, before the
Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Alder-
men, and Governours of the severall Hospitals
of this City.

GIBSON.

ST. MATTH. XXV. 46.

Verily I say unto you ; In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me.

ST. Paul, being brought unto the *Aroopagus*, or highest Court in *Athens*, to give an account of the Doctrine he had preach'd concerning *Jesus and the Resurrection*, fitly took that Occasion to imprint on the Minds of those Magistrates, before whom he stood, the Belief of a Future Judgment, and to shew, what Connexion there was between the *Rising of Jesus* from the Grave, and his Coming to judge the World. God, said he, hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead†. The Rising of *Jesus* from the Dead, was an irresistible Evidence of the Truth of his Doctrine ; and one part of his Doctrine was, That he would judge the World. By Rising from the Dead, he took Possession of his Kingdom (all Power being then given unto him both in Heaven and in Earth*) and was to reign, till all his Enemies were put under his Feet†, that is, till Evil Men, and Evil Spirits were judged ; which was the last and most illustrious Instance, wherein his Kingly Power was to be exercised : And then (and not till then) he was to deliver up his Kingdom to the Father*. On these (but, more especially, on the former of these) Accounts, did God give assurance unto all Men, that he would judge the World in Righteousness by that Man whom he had ordained, in that he raised him from the Dead.

† *Acts*, xvii. 31.

† *Math.* xviii. 18.

* *1 Cor.* xv. 25.

* *Ibid.* 24.

The Festival of our Lord's *Resurrection* we have already celebrated ; and may now therefore turn our Thoughts not improperly to consider the chief *Consequence* of his *Resurrection*, a Judgment to come : That Branch of it, especially, which relates to the Enquiries that our Judge will then make concerning our Obedience to his great Commandment of *Charity* ; the enforcing of which, is the pious and peculiar Design of these Annual Assemblies.

In the Account of that Solemnity, which our Blessed Saviour himself hath given us, we are told, that he will then say to them on his right hand ; Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Amaz'd at this merciful

A Spittal-Sermon.

Sentence, and no ways conscious of any such Deserts, these good and humble Persons are said to reply; *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or, when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?* To which our Saviour makes this memorable and gracious Return; fit to be engraven in the Hearts, and to be ever sounding in the Ears of all industrious Promoters of Charity; *Verily, I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me.* True it is, *Me* in Person ye never reliev'd, supported, comforted: but, since ye perform'd these kind Offices to Others (who belong'd to me) at my Command, and for My Sake; I take what you did to them [even to one of the least of them] as done to myself, and shall, under that Notion, now give you an exceeding Recompence for it. *Come, therefore, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World!*

I do not think, this Account is to be understood literally, but with such Allowances as are usually made in the Explication of our Saviour's Parables; which hold, not in every particular Circumstance, but only as to the main Scope and Drift of them. Now the general Design of this Relation manifestly is, to propose to us Two Considerations, which are powerful Inducements to the Practice of Charity: One, "That upon this Head we shall chiefly be examin'd and try'd, at the great Day of Account;" The other, "That Acts of Mercy done to the Poor, shall then be accepted, and rewarded, as done to our Saviour himself."

Of these Two Points, the former is sufficiently imply'd throughout the Tenor of our Lord's Discourse, wherein all the Instances mention'd, relate to the single Head of Charity: The latter is directly affirm'd, in very Emphatical Words, and with a solemn Preface, never us'd by our Saviour, but to give us warning of some remarkable Truth that is to follow. *Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*

The Words, therefore, afford proper Matter for our Devout Reflection, under the two following Heads of Enquiry:

First, Why, in the Account given of the Proceedings at the Day of Judgment, Acts of Mercy alone are mention'd?

Secondly, In what Sense, and for what Reasons, it may be presum'd, that our Saviour will then accept the Acts of Mercy we now do to his poor Brethren (such he vouchsafes to call them) as done to Himself?

I. As to the first of these Enquiries, it is to be consider'd, That the External Acts of Mercy here mention'd, are suppos'd to include that Principle of Divine Love, or Charity, from whence they flow, and from



A Spittal-Sermon.

from which alone they derive all their Worth and Excellence. 'Tis the Inward Habit, or Grace of Charity, which recommends the Outward Act; so that the Least and Lowest Instances of Goodness, springing from this Source, are in the sight of God of great Price: even a Cup of cold Water given to a thirsty Disciple, in the name of Christ, shall not lose its reward*. Whereas the most extraordinary and shining Acts of Charity, when separated from a Principle of Divine Love, are of no Value; for, if we bestow all our goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth us nothing†. And, therefore, the

* Math.
x. 42.

† 1 Corinths.
xiii. 3.

First, and most obvious Account of the distinguishing mention here made of Acts of Mercy, may be taken from the surpassing Dignity and Worth of that Divine Grace which produceth them; which St. Paul tells us, is preferable even to Faith and Hope: for the greatest of these Three is Charity *

* 1bid. 13.

I should not wander from my Point, if I took occasion here largely to explain the Grounds and Reasons of this Preference; since, whatever Excellence there is in the Cause, or Principle, must derive a proportionable Excellence also on the Effect; and, therefore, a full display of those Grounds and Reasons, would tend to satisfy our present Enquiry. But having other Matter to offer, which is of nearer and plainer Use, I shall mention them only, without insisting upon them.

Charity, then (or a Love of God, which works by a Love of our Neighbour) is greater than Faith, or Hope, because it supposes these Graces to be previously exercis'd, and is indeed the Result and Reward of them. Faith steadfastly believes, Hope eagerly expects; but Love, which is the End and Consummation of both, enjoys.

It not only Unites us to God, but it makes us like him too, and transforms us into a Divine Image; for God is Love*: whereas Faith and Hope have no place in the supream Mind; and, consequently, We our selves bear no Resemblance to God, when we abound in them.

* 1 John
iv. 8.

Charity is more Extensive, as to its Object and Use, than either of the two other Graces, which center ultimately in our selves; for we Believe, and we Hope for Our own sakes: But Love (which is a more disinterested Principle) carries us out of our selves, into Desires and Endeavours of promoting the Interest of Other Beings.

Charity excels also in point of Duration, for it never faileth*; it doth not end with this World, but goes along with us into the next, where it will be advanc'd and perfected: but Faith and Hope shall then totally fail; the one being chang'd into Sight, the other into Enjoyment.

* 1 Cor.
xiii. 8.

And indeed, well hath God suited these Graces to the several States.

to which they belong. Faith and Hope, which are useful in this Life only, may in this Life be exercised to perfection. We may have so vigorous and piercing a Faith, as can be outdone by no Evidence, but that of Sight; we may have so erect and lively an Hope, as can only be exceeded by Fruition, in which it is lost. But Love is as endless in its Degrees, as it is in its Duration; and is fitted, therefore, to an Immortal State, where it may be exerted and improv'd to all Eternity.

2. And this remarkable Property of Love will suggest to us one Reason, why Acts of Charity shall be enquir'd after so particularly, at the Day of General Account; because Good Men are then to be consign'd over to another State, a State of everlasting Love and Charity: And, therefore, the chief Enquiry must then be, How they have abounded in those Graces which qualify them best for an Admission into that State, and for a due Relish of the Divine Pleasures of it; how they have practis'd Charity here, the Exercise of which must be their Duty, and their Happiness for ever. Heaven, and Hell, are the proper Regions of Love, and Hatred; Mercy, and Uncharitableness: Blessed Angels, and pure Souls, exercis'd in the Ministry of Love, are to possess the one; Devils, and damn'd Spirits, who are all Rage, Envy, and Malice, are to inhabit the other. When we stand, therefore, on the Brinks and Confines of those States, at the Day of Doom, we shall be examin'd, how fit we severally are for such Places, and such Company: according as that appears, our several Mansions shall be suitably assign'd to us; and Men and Angels, Good and Bad, even We our selves shall, upon the issue of this single Article, acknowledge the Justice of the Sentence. Indeed,

3dly, This single Article is sufficient to Absolve, or Condemn us: for it is the short Test, and sure Proof of Universal Goodness. The whole Duty of a Christian is nothing but Love, varied through the several Kinds, Acts, and Degrees of it. And Works of Mercy, are the most Natural and Genuine Off-spring of Love; so that from these a Good Man is denominated. The Scripture, therefore, frequently sums up our Duty in *Charity*; and, for that reason, styles it the *fulfilling of the Law*, and the *Bond of Perfection*. Indeed, where *Charity* is, (that is, where the Blessed Fruits of *Charity*, springing from a true Principle of Divine Love, are) there no other Christian Grace or Perfection can be totally wanting; and where *Charity* is not, there may be the imperfect Resemblances of other Christian Graces and Virtues, but not those Graces and Virtues themselves: for such they cannot be, unless fed, and invigorated, and animated by a Principle of Universal *Charity*. So that our Saviour, by professing to examine us on this Head, brings Matters to a short Issue,

A single Point, by which our Cause may be decided as effectually, as by larger Enquiries. It will furnish us with a

4th Reason of his Conduct in this Case, if we consider, how great a stress he laid upon this Duty, while he was upon Earth, how earnestly he recommended it, in how exalted a degree of Perfection he prescrib'd the Practice of it to us: so that he cannot but enquire, with a particular Concern, how we have comply'd with it.

It is his peculiar, his distinguishing Precept, the special Mark and Badge of our Discipleship: *A new Commandment* (said he) *I give unto you, that ye love one another; by this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another*.*

And upon the Article, therefore of our Obedience to this *New Commandment*, he himself will declare, whether we do, or do not be-

long to him. It was one of the last Injunctions he gave, and often repeated to his Disciples, in that Divine Exhortation he made to them

just before he entred upon the Bloody Scene of his Passion; 'twas the great Direction he left with them, when he himself was leaving the World. The first and chief Enquiry, therefore, when he returns to

Judgment, will be, What Weight his Dying Words have had with us?

5. The Nature of the Sentence he is to pronounce, the Rule of

Judgment by which he will at the last day proceed, requires that a particular Regard be then had to our Observation of this Precept. We

shall be judg'd by the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel, and not by the Rigors of unrelenting Justice. God will indeed *judge the World in Righteousness*, but 'tis by an *Evangelical*, not a *Legal* Righteousness;

and by the Intervention of the *Man Christ Jesus*, who is the *Saviour*, as well as the *Judge* of the World; and, as such, hath procur'd that pardon-

ing Grace for us, which mitigates and tempers the Severity of the Rule, and entitles us to the Favour and Mercy of our Judge. But

what Title can He have to Mercy himself, who hath not exercis'd it towards Others? *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy**, in that Day when *Mercy rejoiceth against*

Judgment†: but, on the other Hand, *They shall have Judgment without Mercy, who have shewed no Mercy**. The

Power of *Covering Sin*, is in Scripture ascrib'd to no other Grace, or Virtue whatsoever, but *Charity*: When, therefore, the

Multitude of our *Sins* is to be Judg'd and Punish'd, the fittest and kindest Enquiry that our Judge can make, is, What Deeds of Charity we have to allege, in extenuation of our Punishment.

6. The *Secret* manner, in which Acts of Mercy often are, and ought to be perform'd, requires this publick Manifestation of them at the great Day of account. There are, I think, but Three Duties, in the performance of which God hath, after a peculiar manner, recommended Secrecy to us; *Alms*, *Fasting*, and *Prayer*. The two

latter

A Spiritual Sermon.

latter of these (as far as we are oblig'd to Secrecy in the discharge of them) relate chiefly to our *Selves*, and to our own Concerns: but the first regards our Neighbour alone, and cannot therefore be done altogether without a Witness. However, as far as the Nature of this Duty will admit of *Privacy*, our Saviour hath enjoin'd it; and in Terms of a particular significancy and force. For he knew that Good and Bountiful Minds were sometimes inclin'd to Ostentation, and ready to cover it with a pretence of inciting others by Their Example; and therefore checks this Vanity in these remarkable words: *Take heed, says he, That ye do not your Alms before Men, to be seen of them. — That thou dost not sound a Trumpet before thee, as the Hypocrites do, that they may have Glory of Men: Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest Alms, let not thy Left Hand know*

• *Matth. vi.*
1, 2, 3.

what thy Right Hand doth. * And that we might be encourag'd punctually to observe this Precept, by a Reward

proportion'd to the Nature of the Duty, therefore he adds; *And thy*

Father, which seeth in Secret, shall himself Reward thee Openly †, that is, in the sight of Angels and Men, at the great Day of Retribution. For that this is his meaning,

may appear from a Parallel place in *St. Luke*, where the Reward

Promis'd to Charity, is thus express'd, *and thou shalt be*

Redeemed at the Resurrection of the Just *; at the time,

when God shall judge the Secrets of Men by *Christ Jesus* *;

shall openly Punish their Secret Sins, and openly own and

reward their Secret Vertues; their Acts of *Charity* especially, which,

as they were, in Obedience to his Command, perform'd Privately,

so shall they now, according to his Promise, be *Rewarded Openly*. A

Reward, every way congruous, and fitting! For it gives God and

Good Men the Glory, that would otherways be lost, of many retir'd

Graces and Vertues; which deserve so much the rather to be Pub-

lished, because they declin'd Observation! It reproaches, and fills

with Confusion, those Unmerciful and Wicked Men, who look'd up-

on all such conceal'd Instances of Goodness, as unprofitable Folly, as

the casting of our Bread upon the Waters, which, they did

not think, would thus be found after many Days †. It pro-

claims the Triumphs of Humanity and Goodness in a

proper Audience, even before the whole Race of Mankind, then

Assembled. The Objects of Mercy themselves will be present, and

will, with Bleasure, discover the Blessed Hands that reliev'd them;

nor shall Their Testimony be wanting, when the Judge of the World

doth, as it were, Point and Appeal to them in the Throng, as Evi-

dences of the Equity of that Sentence he is then about to pronounce:

In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren,

ye have done it unto Me.

And this furnishes us with yet one more Reason, why our Saviour

lays such a particular stress on Acts of Mercy; because he looks up-

A Spittal-Sermon.

on every one of them as a *Personal Kindness*, done to himself; ye have done it unto Me! How this is to be understood, and upon what Account our Lord is pleas'd to express himself, on this occasion, with so wondrous a Degree of Condescension, is what I, upon my *Second General Head*, propos'd to shew.

II. In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me. To Me! that is, at my Instance, and for my sake; to my Brethren, as such, on the account of their Relation to me; and what is thus done in Obedience to my Commands, and with a peculiar Regard to my Person, I esteem a Personal Kindness, and will acknowledge and reward it accordingly: For, as he elsewhere speaks, * *Whoever shall give to drink unto one of those little ones a Cup of cold Water only, in the name of a Disciple [or, as belonging to Christ †] verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.* * Matth. x. 41.
† Mark ix. 41.

It is certain, that those Good Men, who take such Pleasure in relieving the Miserable, for Christ's sake, would not have been less forward to minister unto Christ himself, if they had been blessed with an Opportunity of doing it. Now, that they were thus ready to have done, our Saviour reckons as done, and places to their Account. For if there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted according to that a Man hath, and not according to that a Man hath not *. And this is the Ground of that favourable Decision of his, in behalf of the Poor Widow, who, while many, that were rich, cast much into the Treasury, threw in two Mites. — *Verily (said he) she hath cast in more than them All †! i. e. if she had had as much as they all had, she would have cast in more than they all did; and God respects not the Gift, but the bountiful Mind and Intention of the Giver; calling (in this Sense also) the things that are not, as if they were ‡.* * 2 Cor. viii. 12.
† Mark xii. 42, 43.
‡ Rom. iv. 17.

But there is yet a more strict and proper Sense, in which the Words of our Lord may be understood. He hath taken our Nature upon him, and united it to himself; and is, therefore, on the account of this Union and Alliance, some way interested in the Joys and Grievs of those who share the same Nature with him. For, according to the reasoning of the Divine Writer to the Hebrews, both he that sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are, all of one *. [i. e. are all partakers of the same Flesh and Blood; as he afterwards explains himself]; for which Cause he is not ashamed to call them Brethren †. * Heb. ii. 11.
† Ibid. 14.

We are indeed his Brethren, as we are Men: but we are still more so, as we are Christians; that is, as Members of that Mystical Body, of which Christ Jesus is the Head. Now (as St. Paul argues concerning this Mystical Body) whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer

*suffer with it; or one Member be honour'd, all the Members
 † 2 Cor. xiii. 1. rejoyce with it †; The Head specially, which is the Prin-
 cipal of Life, and Motion, and Sense to the rest; and
 from which all the Body by Joints and Bands having Nourishment mini-
 † Col. ii. 19. stered, and being knit together, increaseth with the Increase
 of God *. They are still the same Apostle's Words; who
 is every where full of this Union and Sympathy between
 Christ and his Members; having receiv'd very strong Impressions of
 it at the time of his Conversion, when he heard that Voice from
 Heaven, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art
 thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou per-
 † Acts ix. 4. secutest †. In like manner as Jesus is persecuted, when any
 of his poor Members suffer, he is reliev'd also, when they
 are reliev'd: --- In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these
 my Brethren, ye have done it unto M E.*

Indeed, our Saviour is represented every where in Scripture, as
 the special Patron of the Poor and the Afflicted, and as laying their
 Interests to Heart (as it were) more nearly than those of any other
 of his Members. The Reason of which is not obscurely intimated
 to us.

Our Saviour's Humiliation consisted not merely in taking Human
 Nature upon him, but Human Nature cloth'd with all the lowest and
 meanest Circumstances of it. He led a Life of great Poverty, Shame,
 and Trouble; not having where to lay his Head, or wherewithal to
 supply his own Wants, without the Benevolence of others, or a Mi-
 † 1/a. liii. 3. racule: He was despised and rejected of Men, a Man of Sorrows, and ac-
 quainted with Grief; so that the rest of the World bid, as
 it were, their Faces from him *. Now, in the Epistle to
 the Hebrews we are told, that, by thus taking on him the
 † Heb. ii. 17. Seed of Abraham, he became a merciful and faithful High
 Priest †; who could be touched with the feeling of our Infirmi-
 ties, because he was in all points tempted like as we are *,
 † Ib. iv. 15. and himself also compassed with Infirmary †. If then, by tak-
 † v. v. 2. ing upon himself Human Nature at large, he hath a
 compassionate and tender Sense of the Infirmities of Mankind in ge-
 neral; he must needs, in a Peculiar manner, feel and commiserate the
 Infirmities of the Poor, in which he himself was so eminent a Sharer.
 To the rest of Mankind, he was ally'd indeed by his Humanity;
 but to the Poor, even by the humble and suffering Circumstances of
 it: He was made in the likeness of Men; but most like the meanest
 of the Sons of Men. Wherefore he is not ashamed to call Them Brethren,
 by way of distinction; to publish their near Relation to Him; to
 recommend their Case particularly to Us; to espouse all their Inter-
 ests; to take part of all their Afflictions; and even to acknowledge
 the good Offices we do them, as done to himself. --- I say unto you,
 In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye
 have done it unto Me.

I have

I have dispatch'd the Argument in both its Branches, which I undertook to consider. The Use we are now to make of it, is Obvious and Easie; so Obvious, that I question not but you have prevented me in this Respect, and have all along, as I pass'd from Point to Point, apply'd it your selves, to the enforcing the great Duty of Charity, to the inflaming your Souls with an ardent Love of it, and a Resolution of practising it in such an exalted Degree, as becomes the true Disciples (nay the Friends and Brethren) of Jesus. *Many excellent things are spoken of this Divine Grace, in Scripture; many high Encomiums are there given of it, many encouraging Promises are made to it: but I question, whether of all them taken together, carry more Life, and Force, and Warmth in them, than the Two affecting Considerations I have explain'd to you.* The Wit of Man cannot contrive (for even the Wisdom of God hath not suggested) any more pressing Motives, more powerful Incentives to the exercise of Charity, than these; That we shall be judg'd by it at the last dreadful Day; and that Then, all the Acts of Mercy we have done to the Poor, shall, by our Merciful Judge be own'd, and rewarded, as Personal Kindnesses done to himself.

What can awaken us to do Good, if the Sound of the last Trumpet cannot? If a lively Sence and Anticipation of the great Scene of Judgment which shall then be unfolded, of the Process which shall be form'd, of the Scrutiny which shall be made, of the Sentence which shall be pronounc'd; if, I say, the bright Ideas of these Solemnities, which the Scripture hath taken care to imprint upon our Minds, do not excite us to abound in the *Labour of Love, while it is yet day, e'er the night cometh, when no man can work* *; Vain will be the Attempt of rousing us into the Love and Practice of Goodness, by any less astonishing Methods; all other Applications and Motives whatsoever will be lost upon us; and we must e'en be suffer'd to sleep on in our Security, and take our rest, till our Judgment, which lingreth not, overtakes us, and our Damnation, which slumbereth not †, lays hold of us.

Do we, in good earnest, believe the account of that Day's transactions which our Lord hath given us? Let us shew our Faith by Works, and pass the time of our Sojourning here (as it will then be well for us we had pass'd it) in the unwearied exercise of *Beneficence and Charity*. Can we believe that *God hath appointed a Day wherein he will judge the World by the Man Christ Jesus*; without believing also, that he will judge it in that very Manner, and with those very Circumstances, which the Judge himself hath reveal'd to us? And if so, how can we ever think of appearing at the awful Tribunal, without being able to give a ready Answer to the Questions which he shall then put to us, about the Poor and Afflicted, the Hungry and the

the Naked, the Sick and the Imprisoned? What Confusion of Face shall we be under, when that Grand Inquest begins? When an account of our Wealth, and our Opportunities of doing Good is display'd, on the one side, and a particular of our use, or misuse of them is given in, on the other? And it shall appear, that the Good things, we have *done*, are few and little, in comparison of those we have *receiv'd*? How shall we then wish (to no purpose wish) that it might be allow'd us to live over our Lives again, in order to fill every Minute of them with Charitable Offices, which, we find, will at that time be of so great Importance to us?

In vain shall we then Plead (tho' we could truly plead) that we have been frequent and devout Worshippers of God, Temperate and Sober in our Enjoyments, Just and Conscientious in our Dealings; in vain shall we attempt to justify our selves, as the Rich young Man in the Gospel did, by appealing to the great Duties of the Law, and saying, *All these have I kept from my youth up* *; unless we can also say somewhat more for our selves, than He could; even that we have been liberal in our Distributions to the Poor, and well discharg'd that important Stewardship with which God hath entrusted us. One single Instance of Relief afforded to the Afflicted and Miserable, one *Cup of cold Water given to a Disciple*, i. e. the smallest act of *Charity*, done out of a sincere Principle of Goodness, shall then stand us in greater stead, and recommend us more effectually to the Favour of our Judge, than all our pretended Zeal for the Divine Honour, and the advancement of Religion, than all the Flights and Fervors of Devotion, than all the Rigors and Severities of the Mortified State; nay, than whatever Christian Graces and Vertues we can suppose, is possible to attain, without attaining true Christian *Charity*, i. e. such an ardent Love of God, as manifests it self in a proportionable Love of our Neighbour, and, particularly, in those genuine Fruits of Love, with which Christian Mercy and Tenderness will be sure to inspire us.

This is a Truth, which cannot be too often, or earnestly inculcated, because (important as it is) we are apt, extremely apt to overlook it, and to persuade our selves, that, if we do but observe the Rules of Moral Honesty in all our Transactions; if we wrong no Man, or make Restitution to those we have wrong'd; such a Righteous and Faultless Conduct will secure our Title to Happiness. We own, indeed, that extraordinary Acts of *Charity* are commendable, and shall have their Reward: But we think we can escape Hell, without performing them; and are Humble enough to be contented with the lowest Station in Heaven. Human Judicatories, we observe, give Sentence only on Matters of Right and Wrong, but enquire not into Acts of Bounty and Beneficence; and we easily transfer this known Method of Proceeding from Earthly Tribunals to that of Heaven. To rectify a Mistake of so great Consequence as this,

it was requisite to assure us, that, though the Forms and Solemnities of the Last Judgment, as they are describ'd in the Gospel, may bear some resemblance to those we are acquainted with here below, yet the Rule of proceeding shall be very different; That we shall be Try'd at the Bar, not merely by our Righteousness, but moreover and chiefly by our *Charity*; That it will not avail us then to say, We have done no Evil, if we have done no Good; That however Virtues of Omission (if I may so speak) will not Save us; yet, that Sins of Omission will certainly Damn us. 'Tis because we have *not* given the Hungry, Meat; and the Thirsty, Drink; because we have *not* taken in the Stranger, and clothed the Naked; because we have *not* visited the Sick, and those that are in Prison; that we shall then be included in that terrible Sentence, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels!* The Ignorance of those, who are Strangers to the Covenant of *Christ*, may be wink'd at, and their Future Happiness secur'd to them upon lower Terms: but it is Madness in Christians, after such a Declaration as this, to flatter themselves with the Hopes of getting to Heaven, without a bounding in the Offices of *Charity*. 'Twas chiefly to rouse Men up into a Sense of their Duty and Danger in this respect, that our Saviour utter'd the Parable of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*. The Rich Man is not blam'd in that Parable, as having made use of any unlawful Means to amass Riches, as having thriven by Fraud and Injustice, or grown fat upon the Spoils of Rapine and Oppression: All, that there is laid to his Charge, is, That he was *clothed with Purple and fine Linen, and fared sumptuously every Day*, without regarding the wretched Condition of *Lazarus*, who was laid at his Gate, and who is said indeed to have desired to feed of the *Crumbs which fell from his Table*, but is not said to have obtain'd what he desir'd. And even this want of Humanity to an Object so pityable and moving, did, it seems, deserve to be punish'd with Everlasting Torments. Hear, and tremble all Ye, who have this *Worlds Good*, and see your Brother have need, and shut up your Bowels of Compassion from him *!

* 1 John
iii. 17.

But I believe far better things of All, and know far better things of Many, that compose this Audience; for I see here, the worthy Governours and Encouragers of those Publick and Useful Charities, which are a greater Ornament to this City, than all its Wealth and Splendor; and do more real Honour to the Reform'd Religion, which gave Birth to them, than redounds to the Church of *Rome*, from all those Monkish and superstitious Foundations, of which she vainly boasts, and with which she dazzles the Eyes of Ignorant Beholders.

We live at a Time, when Popery, which is so far shut out by our Laws, as not to be able to re enter openly, is yet stealing privately in by the Back-door of *Atheism*, and making many other secter and un-

perceiv'd Advances upon us. Its Emissaries are very numerous, and very busie in Corners, to seduce the Unwary. And among all the popular Pleas, which they employ to this Purpose, there is none more enluring (I speak what I know, by Experience) than the advantageous Representations they make of the Publick Charities, which abound in Their Communion. Many ways there are of exposing the Vanity of such Pretences: But I have found none more successful, than to direct the Persons, who are struck with the specious Appearances of Charity in *that* Church, to the real and substantial Effects of it in *ours*; those noble Monuments of *Glory to God, and good Will to Men*, which the Piety of our Protestant Ancestors rais'd; and which have since receiv'd as great Additions and Improvements, as the renowned City it self to which they belong. I mention them together, because I take the One of them to have sprung, in some Measure, from the Other; and the present prosperous Estate of this great *Emporium* to be owing, not more to the Industry of its Inhabitants, than to these shining Instances of Charity in which they excel; there being no surer way towards increasing Riches, than by sharing them with the Poor and Needy.

I have not room to give you a compleat View of what hath been expended in such charitable Distributions within the Walls of this City, since the time of our blessed Reformation, when these goodly Plants were first set, which have since, by due Watering and Culture, so wonderfully grown and flourish'd: You may guess at the prodigious Sum to which such an Estimate would amount, when you have heard, What hath been done for the Poor by the five *Hospitals*, and the *Work-house*, within the Compass of one Year, and towards the End of a Long, Expensive War; which, however it may have drain'd our Wealth in other Respects, yet hath (Thanks be to God) not exhausted, and scarce diminish'd our Charity. I shall give you a short Account of *Two Reports*, which were read at large to you Yesterday.

Here an Abstract of these Reports was read,

'Tis not necessary to plead very earnestly in behalf of these Charities; they speak sufficiently for themselves, by a silent, but powerful Eloquence, that is not to be withstood. There is such a Native Comeliness and Beauty in well design'd Works of Beneficence, that they need only be shew'd, in order to charm all that behold them. Particularly These, of which you have had an account, are such Wise, such Rational, such Beneficial Institutions, that it is impossible for a Good Man to hear them represented, without wishing them all manner of Success; and as impossible for one, that is both Rich and Good, not to contribute to it. To relieve the helpless Poor; to make sturdy Vagrants help themselves; to hinder idle

Hands

Hands from being mischievous to the Common-wealth; nay, to employ them so, that they may be of publick Service; to restore Limbs to the Wounded, Health to the Sick, and Reason to the Distracted; to educate Children in an honest, pious, and laborious Manner; and by that Means, to sow a good Seed, of which perhaps another Age, and another Race of Men may reap the Benefit; These are things of so evident Use, of so confess'd an Excellence, that it would be an Affront to Mens Understandings to go about to prove it.

Besides, the Vigilance of those who preside over these Charities, is so exemplary, their Conduct is so irreproachable, that Persons dispos'd to do Good in these Instances, can entertain no Suspensions of the Misapplication of their Bounty; but are almost as sure, that what they give will be made use of to its proper End, as they are that the End it self is Good, for which they bestow it. It is a mighty Check to beneficent Tempers to consider, how often good Designs are frustrated by an ill Execution of them; and perverted to Purposes, which, could the Donors themselves have foreseen, they would have been very loth to Promote. But it is the peculiar Felicity of Charitably-minded Persons in this Place, to have no Objections of that kind to struggle with. All they have to consider is, What Portion of their Wealth they design for the Uses of the Poor; which they may then cheerfully throw into one of these Publick Repositories; secure, that it will be as well Employ'd as their Hearts can desire, by Hands well vers'd in the Labour of Love, and whose Pleasure it is to approve their own Beneficence to the Publick, by a careful Management and Distribution of other Men's *Charity*.

This gives Benefactors an Opportunity of *doing their Alms*, with that Self-denying Secrecy, which our Lord recommends, and which greatly enhances the Present Pleasure, and the Future Reward of them. For we may then safely conceal our good Deeds from the Publick View, when they run no hazard of being diverted to improper Ends, for want of our Own Inspection. Hence it is, that these Publick *Charities* have been all along supply'd, and fed by Private Springs; the Heads of which have sometimes been wholly unknown. And I take it to be an Argument of God's peculiar Blessing upon them, that the Expences of some of them do always much exceed their certain *Annual* Income; but seldom, or never, their Casual Supplies. I call them *Casual*, in compliance with the common Form of Speaking; though I doubt not but that they owe their rise to a very particular direction of Providence. The Overseers of these Bounties seem to Me, like those who live on the Banks of *Nile*; who Plough up their Ground, and Sow their Seed, under a confident expectation, that the Soil will in due time be Manur'd by the overflowing of that River, though they neither see, nor know the true Cause of it.

May God touch the Hearts of all that are able to contribute to such Works of Mercy, and make them as willing as they are able! In order to excite their Christian Compassion, I need use no other Motive than that which the Text suggests; That the Lord *will* look upon whatever we do of this kind, as done to himself; *In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me!* Let us carry this Consideration always in our View, and endeavour to affect our Minds with a lively and vigorous Sense of it. We are apt sometimes to wish that it had been our Lot, to Live and Converse with Christ, to hear his Divine Discourse, and to observe his spotless Behaviour; and we please our selves perhaps with thinking, how ready a Reception we should have given to Him and his Doctrine; how forward we should have been in doing all publick Honours, and private Services, and in abounding in all the Offices of Humanity towards him. The Opportunity we wish for, we have: For, behold, he is *with us to the End of the World*, in the Persons of the Poor and Miserable. They are his Representatives, His Substitutes; deputed by Him to receive our Bounty, in His Name, and in his stead: And we may rest assur'd (for he is faithful who promised) that the Comforts and Supports which we extend to these his Poor Brethren, shall be as kindly Receiv'd, as highly Valu'd, as mightily Rewarded, as if He himself had been the Object of our Pious Liberality; and that we shall, on this account, be found, at the Day of Retribution, among those at his Right Hand, to whom he will say; *Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for You, from the Foundation of the World: For I was an hungred, and Ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and Ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and Ye took me in; Naked, and Ye clothed me; I was Sick, and Ye visited me; I was in Prison, and Ye came unto me.*

God grant, that every One of us, may, by thus shewing Mercy, entitle our selves to the Mercy of Jesus!

To Him, with the Father, and Blessed Spirit, be rendred all Majesty, Might, and Dominion for Ever! Amen.



F I N I S.